A MAN prepares green tea at one of the oldest tea shops in Landi Kotal Bazaar of Khyber tribal district. — Photo by Ibrahim Shinwari

Afridi says KP govt won't become part of any 'failed' policy

Elders from Bajaur, Khyber and Kurram apprise chief minister of their issues

By Umer Farooq

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Mohammad Sohail Afridi said on Sunday that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government would not become part of any 'failed' policy as lasting peace in the region could only be restored by making decisions in consultation with tribal elders and provincial government.

Addressing a jirga comprising parliamentarians and elders from Bajaur tribal district in Chief Minister's House here, he said that peace had been restored in 2018, however, deliberate attempts were being made to worsen the situation.

He stated that decisions, taken behind closed doors, had always worsened the situation.

Sources privy to the meeting said that participants discussed law and order and development schemes in Bajaur district. They said that situation could not be brought under control until all the stakeholders were on the same page.

"Governments are run with wisdom. There should be a mechanism where all the stakeholders agree on a point and be on the same page. That is how I believe things will normalise," former governor Shaukatullah told Dawn.

Others said that there were issues but they were performing duty, protecting their areas and never allowed outsiders to stay on their land. "As far as military operations are concerned, you know well that the chief minister himself is helpless and cannot stop it in his own hometown, how do you expect him to stop such action in Bajaur," a participant told this scribe on condition of anonymity.

He said that development in the merged district was also discussed in detail in the meeting.

He said that the chief minister promised that if the funds, promised by federal government for merged districts, were not released, he would cut funds from other developmental projects and divert them to Bajaur.

A statement issued by Chief Minister's House said that the participants of jirga presented suggestions for establishing permanent peace and expressed full confidence in the chief minister, assuring him all out support.

The jirga discussed law and order situation in the province, improvement in Pak-Afghan relations and development strategy.

It said that the chief minister announced increasing compensation for partially damaged houses in Bajaur from Rs0.16 million to Rs0.5 million following recent operations. He said that federal government had promised Rs1 billion annually at the time when the previously tribal areas were being merged with KP, however, over the past seven years, only Rs168 billion was released.

He said that federal government was not providing funds for Accelerated Implementation Programme (AIP). He issued direction for increasing the upper age limit for recruitment in police department in merged districts.

Also, in another jirga with members from Kurram and Khyber districts, the chief minister said that he understood the agony of military operations. He added that he would not leave his people alone.

He told the jirga members that sectarian issues caused damage and enemies took advantage of the situation. He said that he would soon visit Kurram to resolve issues of displaced persons. He ordered registration of those people, who had left their homes due to the law and order situation, within one week.

Our correspondent from Mansehra adds: Chief Minister Mohammad Sohail Afridi said that the street movement launched from Karachi on the directive of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) founding chairman Imran Khan would bring revolutionary changes in political system of the country.

"This mammoth crowd, which gathered at midnight to welcome the convoy of the street movement from Haripur to different parts of Hazara, is an eye-opener for the government. The people want immediate release of PTI jailed founding chairman, Imran Khan," he said while addressing cheering crowds at Khatm-i-Nubowat Chowk and College Doraha in small hours of Sunday.

PTI chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, the speaker of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Babar Saleem Swati, PTI provincial president Junaid Akbar and deputy president Kamal Saleem Swati were also present on the occasion.

The chief minister said that the street movement had successfully mobilised people from Sindh to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and would soon reach every nook and corner of the country.

"We want to make it clear to the government that this time it cannot suppress the people's street movement. We have turned every city and every square into D-Chowk," he said.

Mr Afridi said the country needed Imran Khan's leadership to steer it out of the prevailing socio-political and economic crises, accusing federal government of failing to address those challenges.

The convoy of the street movement entered Mansehra through Karakoram Highway at Datta, proceeded through Ghazikot and concluded at College Doraha in the early hours of Sunday.

JI leader warns of worsening wheat flour crisis in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Inayat says capacity of police should be enhanced instead of conducting military operations

Dawn Report

LOWER DIR/BAJAUR: Jamaat-i-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa North chief Inayatullah Khan on Sunday warned that the flour crisis in the province was worsening, with prices rising almost daily, and urged both the federal and provincial governments to prevent the situation from spiraling out of control.

Speaking to reporters after congratulating the newly-elected cabinet of the Timergara Press Club, Mr Khan alleged that trucks carrying flour were being stopped at Attock and bribes demanded, leading to severe shortages in Lower Dir and parts of KP, where a 40kg bag of flour was being sold for as much as Rs6,000.

He said the situation amounted to a clear violation of Article 151 of the Constitution, which guarantees free trade among provinces, adding that despite Khyber Pakhtunkhwa being an integral part of Pakistan, the federal government was treating the province unfairly. He also criticised the provincial government for 'failing to fulfill its constitutional and moral responsibilities'.

Responding to a question, Mr Khan said military operations were underway in various parts of the province, but stressed that the growing insecurity must be curbed immediately as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa could not afford further loss of lives. He said instead of military operations, the capacity of police and other civilian institutions be upgraded to cope with the menace of terrorism.

Meanwhile, talking to reporters at the residence of party's leader Maulana Wahid Gul in Khar area of Bajaur, Inayatullah Khan called for resolving the unrest in the merged districts through dialogue rather than military operations.

He expressed sympathies with the family of the JI leader over the Friday night's bombing targeting his house, and said his party had long held the 'principled stance' that issue of law and order in the tribal districts must be resolved through peaceful means, not by use of force.

The JI leader alleged that military operations in the tribal districts were not only causing destruction and unrest but also adversely affecting the socioeconomic conditions of residents.

Responding to a question, the JI leader said their party was in favour of dialogue on all issues, whether they pertained to security or internal political conflicts.

Condemning the bombing at Wahid Gul's residence, the Jamaat's provincial chief called it a cowardly act, stating that such incidents were unacceptable and were intended to silence the voices of peace.

He stated that the relevant authorities must immediately arrest those responsible for the attack.

Private schools' employees entitled to social security benefits, rules PHC

Bench rejects plea of Private Education Network and lifts stay order

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court has declared that private schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are bound to extend social security benefits to their employees including teachers.

A bench consisting of Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Dr Khurshid Iqbal, while rejecting a petition filed by Private Education Network (PEN) observed that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Employees Social Security Act (ESSA), 2021, being a beneficial welfare legislation, was rightly applicable to private schools.

It ruled that private schools undeniably fell within the ambit of 'establishment', to which the law was applicable.

PEN, on behalf of private schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, had challenged a notification issued on Jan 6, 2025, under KPESSA, whereby private schools were deemed to be falling within the definition of the term 'establishment' and liable to extend social security benefits to their staff, including teachers.

The court had earlier suspended the impugned notification while granting interim relief to the petitioner.

Through the impugned notification, the commissioner of KP Employees Social Security Institution ordered applicability of the law to certain establishments including private schools.

It added that the employees of those establishments would be entitled to the benefits provided in different provisions of KPESSA.

The petitioner contended that private school were regulated under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Private Schools Regulatory Authority Act, 2017 (KP-PSRA Act, 2017) and regulations framed thereunder and as it was a special law, it would prevail over the general law.

It was PEN's stance that KPESSA placed onerous burden on private schools requiring "submission of various employee-related records, including attendance registers, salary details, overtime records, and bank account particulars of employees, etc."

Advocate Ali Gohar Durrani represented Employees' Social Security Institution (ESSI), whereas Barrister Asadul Mulk appeared for Private Schools Regulatory Authority (PSRA).

They took the stance that the scope and peripheral sphere of operation of the two statutes , KPESSA and KP-PSRAA, was altogether different, with the former concerned with social security for employees and the latter concerned with regulation of private school insofar as the same related to registration, operation, norm and standards, fee and sibling discounts etc.

Barrister Asadul Mulk argued that the fund maintained by PSRA under sections 13, 14 and 15 of KP-PSRA Act was not applied to provide social security benefits to employees of private schools, though it was applied for other lawful purposes.

In its six-page detailed judgement, the bench relied on a number of judgements of superior courts, wherein Employees' Social Security Ordinance, 1965, was discussed.

Elaborating on the same principles, the bench held: "So far as the issue of functioning of some educational institutions on charitable basis is concerned, in our opinion, that will not place their case on any higher pedestal to exclude them from the applicability of such definitions as such character of charitable nature of an additional benefits offered/extended under the Ordinance of 1965, to their employees. As a matter of fact, proverb 'charity begins at home' will be squarely applicable to their cases".

The bench observed that the simple question for determination was whether by means of the impugned notification, the petitioner had rightly been subjected to the legal effects of KPESSA as an 'establishment' within the meaning of its Section 2(n).

The bench ruled: "It is an inescapable conclusion that KP-PSRA Act, 2017 and Regulations of 2018 are confined to the regulation and supervision of private schools and have no nexus whatsoever with the provisions of social security benefits to employees. The provisions relied upon by learned counsel for the petitioners do not advance the petitioners case as they neither exclude 'private schools' from the definition of 'establishment' nor bar the application of KP-ESS Act, 2021."

The bench declared: "Consequently, the point for determination is answered in the affirmative; and it is held that the impugned notification has been validly issued in exercise of statutory authority and that no illegality or infirmity can be attributed thereto. The writ petition is therefore dismissed."

With the dismissal of the petition, the stay order issued by the court also stands lifted. Thus, from now on private school in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are liable to extend social security benefits to their employees, including teachers.

Cop martyred in Bannu; terrorist killed in Dera

Dawn Report

BANNU/DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Unknown assailants riding a motorcycle gunned down a policeman in targeted killing in Bannu, while security forces killed a terrorist in Dera Ismail Khan on Sunday.

The deceased policeman, identified as Iqbal, was performing duty at the Mazanga police checkpost in Mammakhel area in the jurisdiction of Haved police station.

District police officer Yasir Afridi said that after offering evening prayers, he was on his way back home in his native Akhund Mammakhel village when unknown motorcyclists opened fire on him in front of his house, killing him on the spot. Following the incident, a contingent of police reached the scene, cordoned off the area, and launched a search operation, while further investigation into the incident was underway.

Meanwhile, a terrorist was killed and two others sustained injures during an encounter with the police and Counter-Terrorism Department personnel during an intelligence-based operation in the Kulachi area of Dera Ismail Khan on Sunday.

Officials said that as soon as the security forces reached the suspected location, terrorists opened fire on the police party. Police and CTD personnel retaliated promptly and effectively, leading to a fierce exchange of gunfire. The operation was led by district police officer Sahibzada Sajjad Ahmed.

The officials said that the injured terrorists managed to flee the scene. During the exchange of fire, a constable also suffered minor injuries, and was shifted to a hospital.

Police said the killed terrorist was involved in attacks on police checkposts, and was wanted in several cases of targeted killing.

The security forces also recovered a large cache of weapons, ammunition, hand grenades and a motorcycle from the possession of the killed terrorist.

Police and CTD, with the support of intelligence agencies, immediately launched a search operation in the area, cordoned off the surroundings and initiated efforts to trace and arrest the injured militants who escaped during the encounter.

Police officials said that operations against terrorists would continue till their elimination.

Friend arrested for killing rickshaw driver

By Our Correspondent

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: The mystery surrounding the disappearance of a rickshaw driver, Ghulam Fareed Baloch, who went missing on December 30, 2025, has been solved, as he was murdered by his own friend over a financial dispute near Nakhlistan Park here, the police said.

DSP city circle Hafiz Mohammad Adnan successfully traced the blind murder case.

According to the police, later the body was thrown into the Indus River. During the investigation, police recovered the victim's mobile phone and rickshaw from the crime scene. A search operation is currently underway in the Indus River to recover the body.

According to the police, on January 6, Saifullah Baloch, a resident of Sheikh Raju area, filed a report with the cantonment police station under Section 365 of Pakistan Penal Code, stating that his son, Ghulam Fareed Baloch, a rickshaw driver who also owned a mobile phone, left home on December 30, 2025, carrying Rs40,000 to deposit an installment of his three-wheeler but never returned. His mobile phone was also switched off.

Following the report, on the instructions of DPO Sajjad Ahmed Sahibzada, a special investigation team was formed headed by DSP city circle Hafiz Mohammad Adnan. During the investigation, police arrested the victim's friend, Latif Wazir, during a raid. His statements appeared suspicious.

During initial interrogation, the accused confessed that he shot dead Fareed Baloch over a monetary dispute and dumped the body into the Indus River near Nakhlistan Park, close to Dera Ismail Khan Bridge.

DSP Mohammad Adnan reached the spot and recovered the victim's mobile phone and rickshaw. Subsequently, a search operation was launched in the Indus River; however, till the filing of this report, the body of Fareed Baloch had not yet been recovered.